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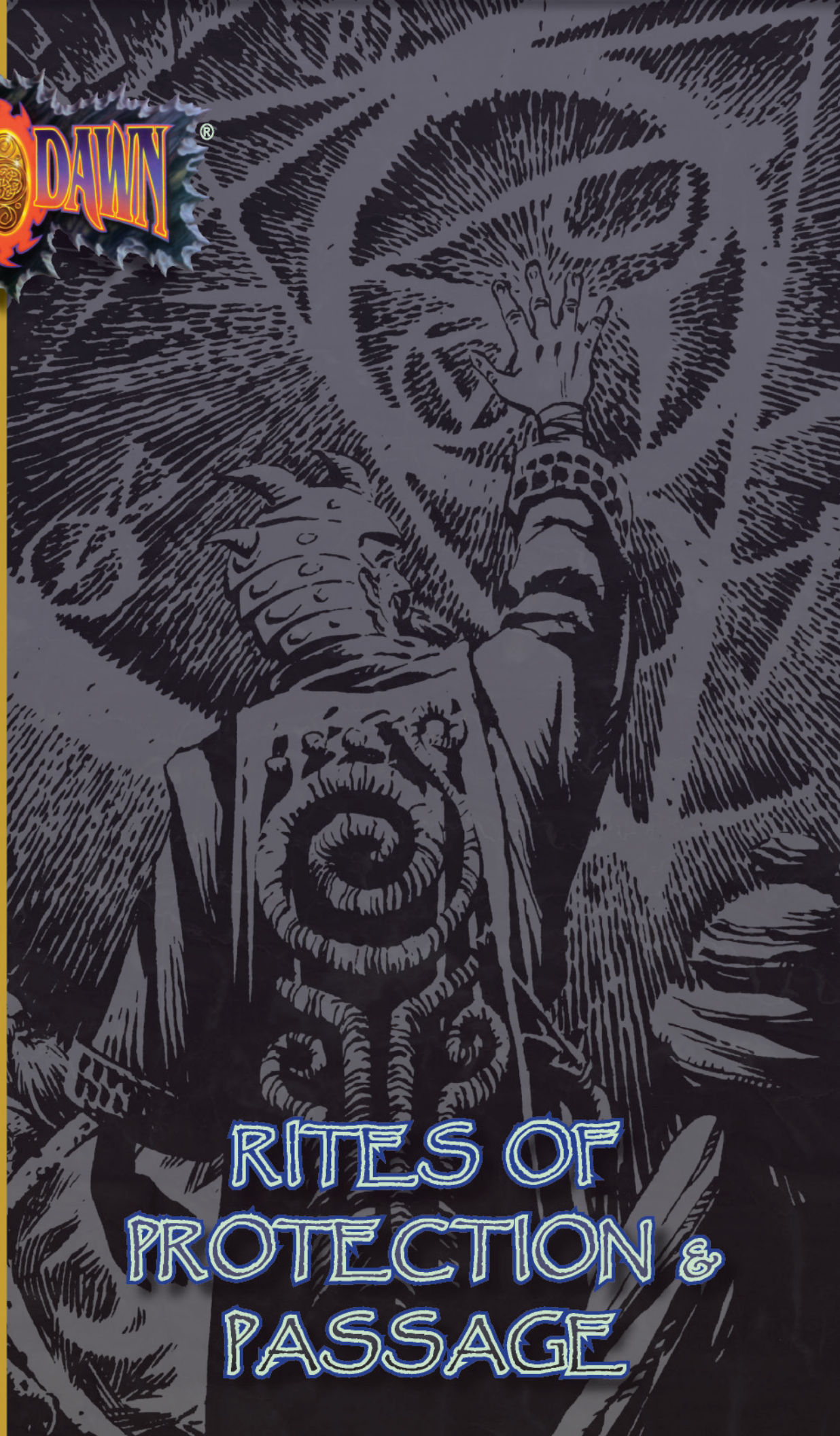

RITES OF PROTECTION & PASSAGE

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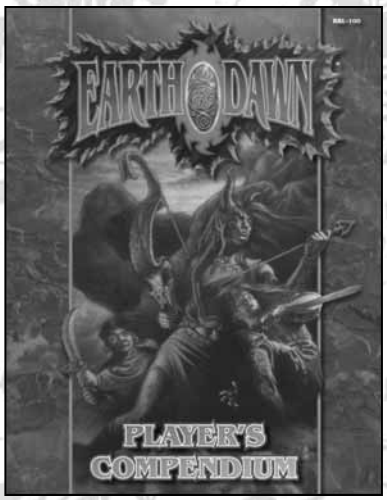
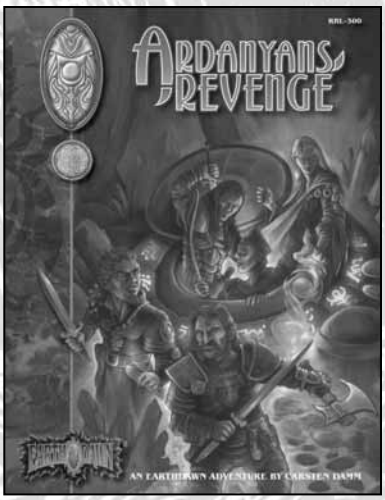




Rites of Protection and Passage

Of course we will provide you with the means to survive the Scourge—that's why we're here. Yes, our services do come with a price, but a very fair one. So tell me… what's the population size of your settlement?

—Kalladan Vhom, Theran *naegate*

In the decades preceding the Scourge, the Theran Empire's closely guarded secrets finally paid off. The Rites of Protection and Passage—developed by the Empire's School of Shadows—became the key to expanding Thera's borders.

Theran negotiators began traveling the Empire, visiting faraway kingdoms, city states and other nations. Accompanied by an entourage of magicians and advisors from the School of Shadows, Theran negotiators demanded a high price for the protective wards. The Empire needed slaves, and—with the Scourge imminent—almost everyone was willing to negotiate. By signing allegiance with Thera, many governments gave up some of their power in return for protection from the Horrors. Selling entire towns into slavery was a common practice to afford the high prices Thera demanded.

But not everyone was willing to resort to slavery to meet the Empire's demands. Kingdoms like Landis and Throal worked furiously to pay for the rites with raw elements. Wyrm Wood, among others, never even started negotiations with Thera, instead trying to build a kaer on their own. Desperate and dangerous people attempted to gain the Rites of Protection and Passage by force—some were even successful. As a result, the negotiators' airships and caravans were heavily protected by Theran forces.

The first part of this document provides general information on the construction of kaers, including guidelines aimed to help you creating your own. The second part contains considerations for running a kaer campaign, and offers advice on creating kaer-dweller characters.

On the Construction of Kaers

Immediately after receiving the Rites of Protection and Passage, people began to construct a kaer or a citadel, using Thera's blueprints. During this time, everyone seemed to work on the shelter that was supposed to be a safe haven from the coming Horror invasion.

The costs of building a kaer or citadel were immense, and it often took generations to finish the construction. Each and every kaer required extensive planning and preparation. It is transcribed that many kaers were not finished due to lack of resources or construction flaws.

Finding a place that met the requirements for building a kaer was a demanding task. The locations where kaers could be placed were hard to reach, as they had to be underground. Natural caves and mines were the best places to start with—they were most likely to provide the stability required to house a large population over a long time. Unfortunately, underground caves of sufficient size were rare and not found everywhere. Extending smaller caves was necessary, but often proved very hazardous.

Citadels were harder to build, and even more expensive. While an underground site was not needed, a whole city could only be preserved by erecting large, elemental domes. Because most citadels could not be hidden from sight, they were exposed to attacks—a definite disadvantage to the kaers. Many citadels fell during the first decades of the Scourge.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF A KAER

Although each kaer is unique in its design, most kaers constructed under Theran supervision followed similar concepts. For example, the kaer's government was usually housed in a central chamber. If this chamber was large enough, it also contained other buildings such as a common meeting place, a library and hall of records.

Smaller chambers contained living quarters. Only the largest and wealthiest kaers had the space to build real houses and a dome-shaped ceiling, imitating a surface setting. Most kaers were built with a growing population in mind, so that there was enough space to accommodate more Name-givers over the centuries.

Food production and plant growth was usually separate from the living quarters—for several reasons. First, food and plants had to be guarded from thieves and evenly split to ensure everybody's survival. Animals are filthy and stink if housed in crammed quarters—more than a good reason to keep them separate, if at all. Many kaers never housed even a single animal for those reasons.

Light was provided by light quartzes imitating sunlight. Most of the smaller light quartzes that just glow constantly were used to illuminate the tunnels and hallways. Larger and more complex ones were able to imitate a day- and night cycle by fading on and off regularly, and usually found their place in the ceiling of the larger halls.

Most important was the supply of air and water. Bound elemental spirits were often used to keep these resources clean, but it is also known that there were other means to filter water and air—such as sponge plants and elemental water filters. If there wasn't an underground river which could be tapped for fresh water, it had to be recycled. Fresh air came in through heavily warded shafts or was produced by tiny portals into the Elemental Plane of Air.

Every kaer has at least one large gate, primarily used to bring in the construction materials. In addition, the kaer usually has at least one smaller opening, called a caisson. The caisson works like a sluice, with one door on the inside and another one on the outside. Only one door can be opened at any one time, allowing Name-givers to leave the kaer without compromising the wards.

Strong defense mechanisms—both magical and mundane—surround a kaer. All of a kaer's exits were inscribed with the Runes of Warding, which were powered from an *azhûn*—a powerful magical device which also allowed controlling the wards from within the kaer. Directly beyond these wards were other defenses—traps of all sizes to defend the kaer from intruders. Some of these traps were designed to kill even the strongest physical horror—and could snap the neck of an elephant within the blink of an eye. From the outside world, a kaer was usually very well hidden. Naturally, the entries from the surface were carefully chosen and altered to be disguised. Powerful deceptions powered by illusion magic often helped to oblique them.

ON LIVING IN A KAER

While daily life in a kaer is mostly dull and unchanging, there are highlights that keep a kaer's inhabitants entertained. Depending on the size of the kaer, it might house illusionists and troubadours who tell stories of all kinds, supporting each other with their abilities and illusions. Numerous festivals are celebrated over the year, events that everyone looks forward to.

In a kaer, even the smallest bits of news make their rounds fairly quickly. Most people know each other; there are only few secrets and far too many rumors. Feuds usually have their roots in disputes of previous generations, and peace is not always the state of affairs.

While it took only a few generations to get accustomed to living underground, the unchanging way of things below the earth often led to grievous changes in customs and culture of the people. If an enclosed society develops over a time that spans dozens of generations, it inevitably leads to unique ways of life

among the population of a kaer. Most kaers housed Name-givers of different races, and it was inevitable that their distinct cultures merged over time, usually in a fashion related to population distribution. For example, in a kaer with a population consisting of dwarfs and humans, human customs would most likely be predominant if humans were more numerous.

The circumstances of an enclosed environment also give birth to customs that seem unnecessary over ground. For example, as a result of the overpopulation that befell the people of Kaer Skirruch, every family was allowed to have a single child only—having further offspring was a crime punishable carrying the death sentence. Given enough time, these customs became part of daily life and eventually found their way into the culture of the kaer's population.

It demands a lot of creativity to survive in an underground setting over centuries. To ensure survival in a kaer, laws and rules have to be followed strictly. Depending on the government, either the magistrate or appointed judges sentence criminals. Kaer guards are used for law enforcement, to ensure everybody lives in peace.

Kaer Campaigns

The easiest way to introduce new players to the world of **Earthdawn** is to start play inside a kaer still sealed from the rest of the world. By starting the campaign within a kaer, a gamemaster can introduce the players to a self-contained environment which is easy to explain to newcomers. Once the kaer opens, the players can learn about Barsaive along with their characters, exploring Barsaive piece by piece; allowing the gamemaster to carefully control each revelation for dramatic effect and roleplaying value. Experienced players might also enjoy a kaer campaign as a nice change of pace. This section will provide some additional details and considerations for gamemasters interested in running this type of adventure.

Campaign Time

The most important consideration is when to start the campaign. **Ardanyan's Revenge** opens the possibility to start play inside a kaer where the kaer's residents—including the player characters—are unaware that the Scourge is over. At the end of the adventure, the player characters witness the opening of the kaer—which could also be a long-term goal of a kaer campaign.

A kaer campaign can also start in a different era. In regards to the example above, the long term goal could be the opposite: sealing the kaer from the outside world. The player character would witness the final stages of the kaer's construction and would have to ensure that their kaer is untainted before the gates are closed. The largest part of this campaign would take place in pre-Scourge times, giving the players a chance to see how different the world was before the long night.

A third option would be to have the kaer campaign start during the Scourge—with no hope that the doors are opened during the character's lifetimes. It is a dangerous and desperate time—the heroes might have to fight Horrors and their spawn, preventing the kaer's wards to be breached. They might witness the separation of the kaer's society in different camps, and might fight a small-scale war against other inhabitants. Diseases, mad questors, natural disasters and—of course—the Horrors would play a prominent role in such a campaign.

The setting material provided in the description of Kaer Ardanyan (see p. XX of **Ardanyan's Revenge**) might spark some ideas on how to run adventures in the different eras, and gamemasters are invited to expand the material provided and fit their own ideas into this setting.

SETTING

Running a kaer campaign requires a little effort on behalf of the gamemaster. While the bounds of the setting are limited, they have to be fleshed out in greater detail (as outlined in **Designing a Kaer**, below). In an enclosed environment, the characters are likely to know every corner of the kaer. They are familiar with the gamemaster characters and the gamemaster characters know them in turn. The characters will also know most of the kaer's history, which has to be fleshed out in advance.

The location of the kaer is also important, because it might limit the choices the players can make when creating their characters. For example, a kaer located in the high mountains is likely to be populated by dwarfs and trolls, but it might cancel out the choice of playing an elf or windling character. See **Creating Kaer-dweller Characters**, below, for more information.

DESIGNING A KAER

Sooner or later, any **Earthdawn** gamemaster has to develop a kaer for his adventures—be it to use it as a dangerous location for his players or to run a kaer campaign. In the light of the considerations above, designing a kaer follows a series of four steps detailed below.

❶ Determine Population
❷ Determine Location
❸ Develop Kaer History
❹ Draw a Map

DETERMINE POPULATION

The first decision is the most important one, as it affects every step that follows. What Name-givers populate the kaer? Which race is predominant? How many Name-givers live in the kaer?

If the kaer houses more than one Name-giver race, determine the racial composition of the kaer. The answer to this question influences the next step to a certain degree, as the predominant race is most likely the one that has constructed the kaer. The racial composition of a kaer can change over time—orks, for example, have a high birth rate that might turn the tide in the kaer's future. Gamemasters should keep in mind that the t'skrang race went into hibernation during the Scourge. Likewise, obsidimen either remained merged to their liferocks or went into hibernation after they spend a few years underground. Unless there is a strong reason why these races are not hibernating in the kaer's setting, the effects of their presence should be taken into account.

Regarding the size of the population, the following figures might help. A small kaer would house between

2,000 and 5,000 inhabitants, which equals a small settlement or town. Kaers of smaller size are very rare, and have most likely failed to survive the Scourge. A medium-sized kaer has between 5,000 and 30,000 inhabitants, equaling a small city or a large town. Most of the kaers build in Barsaive were of this size. The largest kaers housed up to 100,000 Name-givers, and are not very numerous—at this size, most governments decided rather to build a citadel to preserve their capital city. The Kingdom of Throal is the only kaer of this size in Barsaive.

DETERMINE LOCATION

As mentioned above, the predominant race is most likely the one that build the kaer in the first place. You can assume that it was related to a government of pre-Scourge times, who funded the construction. For example, there is a good chance that a dwarven kaer was associated with the Kingdom of Throal, and a human kaer might have been build by the humans of the Kingdoms of Landis or Marrek.

A kaer is usually located close to the lands of that nation or city state. The exact geographical location can add much to the setting. For example, the main kaer of Scavia was build into the high cliffs of the Scarlet Sea, which are riddled with vast mazes close to rolling waves of hot magma. The king of Scavia believed that this location would provide additional security.

Assuming the kaer is located in Barsaive, refer to the **Barsaive Province** chapter on p. XX of the **Player's Compendium** for a complete description and a map of the province.

DEVELOP KAER HISTORY

If the kaer is populated by members of more than one Name-giver race, the clash of cultures is likely to have a strong impact on the development of the population. Overpopulation might lead to unforeseen events. Other dangers—such as the ever-present Horrors, natural disasters or diseases—will definitely find their way into the kaer's history books.

Also decide about the kaer's government—is the kaer ruled by a council of elders? A long-standing

dynasty or a charismatic leader? Or perhaps by an oligarchy of magicians, questors, or Master Adepts? Was the government changed during the Scourge? Did a war erupt among different political factions?

The Scourge lasted about four centuries. If the construction time and recent events are included, the entire history of a kaer covers up to 600 years. While the kaer's past needs not to be written down on hundreds of pages, the result should be complete enough to cover the most important events—beginning with pre-Scourge times, the Scourge itself and the time after the Scourge. Try to answer as many of the following questions as possible:

Before the Scourge

Who build the kaer? How were the Rites of Ritual and Protection acquired? Did anything unusual happen during the construction? Was the kaer finished in time? Did the kaer take up any refugees before the gates were closed? Did a Horror manage to slip in when the gates were closed?

During the Scourge

Was the kaer attacked by Horrors, or did a Horror enter the kaer unnoticed? Were the gates closed for the entire time? What problems befell the population—were there any diseases, cave-ins, intrigues, feuds or even wars that shaped the history of the kaer? How did the Name-givers manage to overcome their cultural differences? What does the population know about the outside world—is the information contained in the library even remotely accurate?

After the Scourge

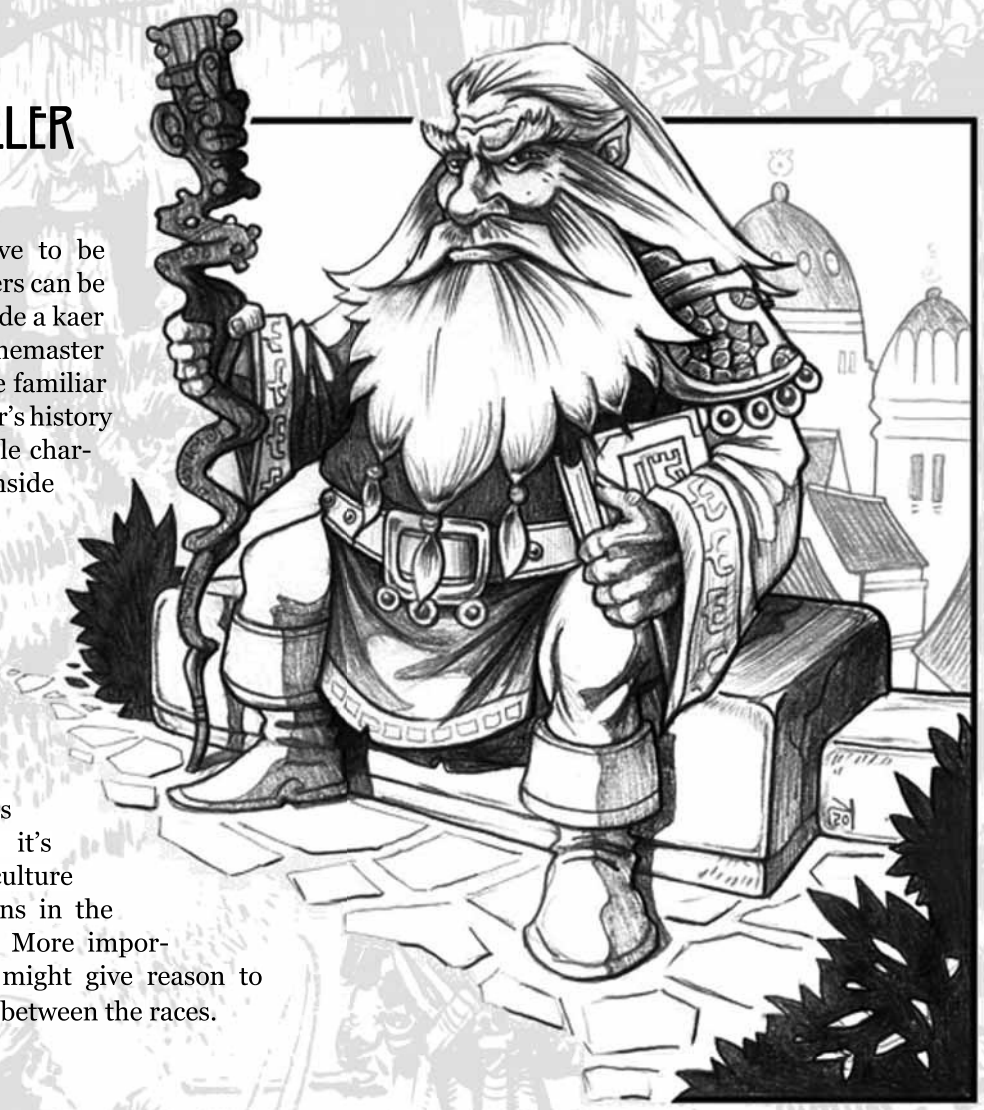
Is the kaer still closed? If so, why? If not, when did it open its gates? Did an exploration party exit prematurely and never returned? Did a (Mad) Passion visit the kaer? What happened after the population left? Did anyone (or anything) take up residence in the abandoned halls after the inhabitants left?

DRAW A MAP

It's usually best to begin with a simple sketch, one that can be altered later on. Once everything is in place, a final version of the map can be created. If the kaer has more than one level, there should be several maps, each indicating how to get from one level to the next.

The previous decisions will have an impact on the layout of the kaer, depending where it is located and who constructed it. The map should try to take the following things into account: a central chamber, living quarters, food production, animal housings, the main gate (and possibly other exits), the *azhûn*, water and air supply, and any other noteworthy sites (such as a cave in or uninhabited areas).

Creating Kaer-Dweller Characters



Some guidelines have to be established before characters can be created that have lived inside a kaer for their entire lives. Gamemaster and players alike should be familiar with the setting and the kaer's history in order to create believable characters that have a place inside the kaer.

Name-giver Races

The population of a kaer is important for the choice of race. Not all Name-giver races are available in every kaer. If the kaer houses members of more than one race, it's likely that customs and culture differ from the descriptions in the **Player's Compendium**. More importantly, the kaer's history might give reason to superstition and prejudice between the races.

Disciplines

Only the Disciplines that were present after the kaer's gates were sealed are available in a kaer setting—unless there is a very good reason why a Discipline should suddenly spring into existence. Spirits are unable to pass through a kaer's wards, so the use of the Ritual of the Ghostmaster talent is limited to the spirits that remain trapped inside the kaer.

Tradition handed the knowledge down from generation to generation, and there were many cases in which a Discipline was wiped out because the last master of that Discipline died. While many Disciplines (like the Warrior, Swordmaster, Weaponsmith, Scout, and Thief; or Illusionists and Troubadours as entertainers and keepers of song and legend during the Scourge) were pretty common in almost every kaer or citadel, several Disciplines are only practiced in certain kaers, depending on location and population.

Sky Raiders and Air Sailors, for example, were only found in kaers of a certain size, where air boats and ships were at least available for proper training. Needless to say, the Sky Raider discipline was only practiced in certain kaers with a large troll population—most of them located in the Twilight Peaks or the Delaris Mountains.

Practice of the Beastmaster and Cavalrymen Disciplines required the presence of a number of animals in the kaer—which wasn't the case in every kaer. Cavalrymen were usually found in kaers with a large ork population, tending to the animals and beasts that lived among them. The Beastmaster Discipline, however, was a rare sight in most kaers and citadels. Many Beastmasters survived elsewhere—under the wings of a dragon host (Usun or Mountainshadow, for example), among the Cathan tribes of the Servos Jungle, or outside of Barsaive.

Almost every kaer and citadel has a number of magicians present. Elementalists were a common sight in citadels, where large elemental shields had to be taken care of. The Runes of Warding used inside a kaer were commonly tended by Wizards, although their design made it possible for other magicians to control them.

Magicians

At the gamemaster's discretion, use the optional rules on the following page for magician characters in a pre-Scourge or kaer campaign.

MAGICIANS

Optional Rule: Magicians in a pre-Scourge or kaer campaign don't have access to the Spell Matrix talent as these were developed later on — instead, they use raw magic or spell matrix objects. Gamemasters who want to take this historical fact into account for their campaign should use this optional rule for magician characters. The following guidelines show how this would work.

Raw Magic

Casting raw magic inside a kaer is usually safe — unless the kaer has been breached by a Horror. Use the entries given for the Safe region type on the Raw Magic Table (see the **Player's Compendium** on p. 289) when making tests for Warping and Damage. The chances to gain a Horror mark are virtually non-existent, and the gamemaster should ignore the listed Horror Mark Step when the spell is cast inside a kaer.

Spell Matrix Objects

Spell Matrix Objects can be created with the Create Spell Matrix Object talent knack (see the **Talent Knacks** and **Enchanting** chapters of the **Player's Compendium** for details). These items work almost like regular spell matrices, as outlined in the **Spell Magic** chapter on p. 289 of the **Player's Compendium**.

Alternative Talents

Needless to say, the magicians of these times don't have access to the various Spell Matrix talents. Replace them with the following talents when playing magician characters in a pre-Scourge or kaer campaign. **Please note that magician characters receive only six instead of seven talents at First Circle when using this optional rule.**

Elementalist

First Circle: Endure Cold
Second Circle: Item History
Fourth Circle: Gliding Stride
Seventh Circle: Woodskin
Eighth Circle: Fireblood
Ninth Circle: Earth Skin
Twelfth Circle: Warp Missile
Fourteenth Circle: Gold Sense
Fifteenth Circle: Soften Blade

Illusionist

First Circle: Arcane Mutterings
Second Circle: First Impression
Fourth Circle: Lasting Impression
Seventh Circle: Taunt
Eighth Circle: Steel Thought
Ninth Circle: Incite Mob
Eleventh Circle: Steely Stare
Thirteenth Circle: Sense Poison
Fourteenth Circle: Animate Object
Fifteenth Circle: Lion Spirit

Nethermancer

First Circle: Frighten Animals
Second Circle: Abate Curse
Fourth Circle: Item History
Seventh Circle: Lion Heart
Eighth Circle: Blood Share
Ninth Circle: Spirit Mount
Eleventh Circle: Temper Self
Thirteenth Circle: Temper Other
Fourteenth Circle: Develop Animal Sense
Fifteenth Circle: Second Chance

Wizard

First Circle: Haggle
Second Circle: First Impression
Sixth Circle: Creature Analysis
Eighth Circle: Winning Smile
Ninth Circle: Spirit Strike
Eleventh Circle: Temperature
Twelfth Circle: Second Chance
Thirteenth Circle: Detect Falsehood
Fourteenth Circle: Safe Thought
Fifteenth Circle: Astral Pocket

Weaponsmith

Ninth Circle: Steely Stare
Fourteenth Circle: Blade Juggle
Fifteenth Circle: Ethereal Weapon

THE AGE OF LEGEND

RBL-506

Before science, before history, an era of magic existed in our world's dim past. Magic flowed freely, touching every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Name-giver races. It was an age of heroes, an age of fantastical deeds and mythical stories. It was the Age of Legend.

As the levels of magic rose, so did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic lured the Horrors from the depths of astral space—nightmarish creatures that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, entire nations hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.

A century ago, the people of Barsaive emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels. Trolls, dwarfs, elves, orks, and humans live side by side with exotic races: the lizard-like t'skrang, the small, winged windlings, and the earthen obsidimen. Fantastical creatures dwell once more in the forests and jungles. Arcane energies offer power to those willing to learn the ways of magic.

In the Age of Legend, bold heroes from all across Barsaive band together—ready to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire, which seeks to bend the rebellious province again to their yoke. Through noble deeds and sacrifice, the heroes of the world forge Barsaive's future, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures.

This file provides general information on how kaers were designed and built before the Scourge. Gamemasters will find useful hints on how to set up and run a kaer campaign and what considerations to make when designing kaers and kaer-dweller characters. Requires the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums** to use.

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www.earthdawn.com

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